United Nations A/57/210

General Assembly

Distr.: General
12 July 2002

Original: English

Fifty-seventh session
Item 67 (q) of the preliminary list*
General and complete disarmament

Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report reflects practical disarmament activities of States, including the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures, and regional and subregional organizations in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York in July 2001.

* A/57/50/Rev.1.

** The late submission is attributable to the need to rearrange and harmonize the text owing to the overlap among three different resolutions on small arms adopted at the fifty-sixth session.

02-48002 (E) 140802

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 56/24 P of 29 November 2001, entitled "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures", the General Assembly encouraged Member States, including the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures, to lend their support to the Secretary-General in responding to requests by Member States to collect and destroy small arms and light weapons in post-conflict situations. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-seventh session a report on the implementation of the resolution, taking into consideration the activities of the Group of Interested States in that regard.

2. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request. It provides an overview of the activities of States in the field of practical disarmament measures, including the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures, and regional and subregional organizations during the period from July 2001 to July 2002.

II. Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures

3. The Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures was established in March 1998, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/38 G of 9 December 1997. The objectives of the Group include:

- Examination of and, wherever possible, joint support to concrete projects of practical disarmament, particularly as designed and initiated by affected countries
- Discussion of policy issues relating to such projects
- Exchange of information about relevant lessons learned in the field of practical disarmament, and its dissemination to interested countries
- Encouraging the harmonization of national legislation to monitor illicit arms traffic across borders
- Focus on "hands-on" proposals with practical and attainable objectives that would have a real impact on the population affected
- Financial and political contributions would be voluntary and clearly limited in scope.

4. During the period under review, members of the Group have provided financial assistance to the United Nations to undertake fact-finding and assessment missions to the following countries: Cambodia, Kenya, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka.[1] The Group also held five meetings in which it was briefed on: implementation of the weapons collection project in Nguigimi, Niger; the United Nations fact-finding missions to Kenya, Sri Lanka and Papua New Guinea; and the disarmament assessment mission to Sierra Leone. During the same period, the Group also considered the establishment of an electronic database on bilateral and multilateral practical disarmament projects and the peace and disarmament education initiative being undertaken by the Department for Disarmament Affairs in collaboration with the NGO Hague Appeal for Peace.

III. Requests from Member States for United Nations assistance

A. Cambodia

5. As a follow-up to the fact-finding mission that visited Cambodia in January 2001 (see A/56/182, paras. 14-16), a second mission, led by the Department for Disarmament Affairs and including representatives from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was dispatched to Cambodia in June 2002. The objective of the second mission was to follow up on the initial information-gathering effort made in January 2001 and to determine the feasibility of further expanding United Nations involvement in those weapons collection projects already being implemented by the Government of Cambodia, with assistance provided by the European Union and the Government of Japan. The formulation and design of a project document to support national initiatives for arms collection was also to be considered, in full consultation with all national and relevant regional authorities and United Nations agencies and taking into account the views of civil society. This initiative was formulated within the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted at the United

Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (July 2001), as well as the "weapons for development" programmes that the Department for Disarmament Affairs has conducted in other countries.

B. Papua New Guinea

6. On 14 September 2001, the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations communicated a formal request for United Nations assistance in the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement, with particular emphasis on weapons collection and disposal. With the concurrence of the Security Council (S/2001/1028), on 23 October 2001, the Secretary-General responded positively to the request of the Government of Papua New Guinea, as supported by the Bougainville parties (S/2001/988).

7. An inter-agency evaluation mission, led by the Department for Disarmament Affairs, was subsequently dispatched to Bougainville from 1 to 10 May 2002. The mission was tasked with determining, in consultation with all signatories to the Bougainville Peace Agreement, the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville, members of the Peace Monitoring Group and other relevant actors, the best means through which the United Nations might facilitate substantive support to the continued verification and implementation of the weapons disposal plan, as detailed in the Peace Agreement.[2] The objective of the initiative was to ensure that the momentum then characterizing efforts by all parties to implement the Peace Agreement was sustained and that the handing over of weapons by ex-combatants would help clear the way for continued post-conflict peace-building activities in Bougainville.

8. The mission recommended that additional support be provided to the Bougainville peace process, with particular focus on enhancing implementation of the weapons disposal plan. In that connection, the Mission was of the view that the Organization could play an instrumental role in assisting all key stakeholders by promoting peace and reconciliation efforts through an enhanced public awareness campaign and the provision of additional logistical and financial assistance to local reconciliation processes. The assessment mission also concluded that, in addition to such peace and reconciliation efforts, there was also a parallel opportunity in Bougainville to apply a preventive disarmament approach, possibly to include the promotion of a culture of peace, peace and disarmament education, and the empowerment of women's groups and other community-based organizations in a position to undertake conflict resolution activities throughout the island.

C. Sri Lanka

9. In response to a request by the newly elected Government and following up on an earlier visit to Colombo in December 2001 by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, the Secretary-General authorized the dispatch of an inter-agency evaluation mission to Sri Lanka. The mission was led by the Department for Disarmament Affairs and included representatives from the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, as well as the United Nations country team in Sri Lanka.

10. The mission visited Sri Lanka from 11 to 18 February 2002 and was tasked with determining, in consultation with the Government of Sri Lanka and other relevant national and local actors, the feasibility of implementing a weapons collection programme in those areas designated by the Government. The objective of such a programme would be to address the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in the country through the design and implementation of appropriate activities aimed at building local capacity, promoting development and improving the safety and security of the target communities. The situation in the north and the north-eastern portion of the country was not included in the limited terms of reference of the mission.

11. The mission noted, inter alia, that success in addressing the proliferation and misuse of illicit small arms in Sri Lanka depended critically on two factors, the achievement of a lasting settlement to the armed conflict and a dramatic improvement in political and socio-economic stability in all parts of the country. More specific recommendations made by the mission include the need to build upon the important measures already taken towards strengthening the role of the police as well as the need to involve relevant government agencies, political parties and national civil society representatives in a national coordinating body which would be responsible for policy guidance, including the development of a national plan of action

to address the proliferation of illicit small arms in the country. This would enable key national stakeholders to develop common understandings and engage in the systematic and inclusive search for effective solutions to the danger posed by such weapons.

IV. Regional and subregional initiatives[3]

A. Organization of American States

12. At its thirty-second regular session, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) decided to hold an annual meeting on the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials (CIFTA) and to review the status of implementation of national, regional and global elements of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (July 2001). The OAS General Assembly also decided to hold a seminar on the identification, collection, stockpile management and destruction of small arms and light weapons and encouraged member States to sign or ratify the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. In May 2002, the Consultative Committee established within the framework of CIFTA decided to strengthen its coordination with other international bodies in order to further the implementation of the Convention.

13. Working within this context, the main activity of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) over the past year has been to provide information and training seminars throughout the region with the objective of promoting the adoption of the OAS Firearms Convention and the CICAD Model Regulations for firearms control. The seminars have been carried out in coordination with the OAS Consultative Committee and in collaboration with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Experts from a number of Member States, including Canada, Mexico and the United States of America, participated in the seminars.

B. Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

14. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) held a regional workshop in Vienna in February 2002, aimed at reviewing the implementation of the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons and assessing its relevance to anti-terrorism efforts. During the workshop, participants also reviewed information exchanged in 2001 on national policies and practices, including the application of national marking systems, national controls over the manufacture, import, export and brokering of small arms and light weapons, and weapons destruction techniques. The OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre has also promoted the implementation of the document in Central Asia, where it organized a series of national training workshops on combating illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, followed by a regional meeting in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in May 2002.

15. In the course of 2002, OSCE member States are expected to share additional information on stockpile management and security procedures and to conduct the first annual exchanges on imports to and exports from the region, including information on quantities of small arms and light weapons identified as surplus or seized and destroyed.

V. Conclusion

16. **In addressing the threat posed by illicit small arms and light weapons, the Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects acknowledges past initiatives and encourages the further promotion of practical disarmament measures at the national, subregional, regional and international levels. As the present report illustrates, States, including the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures, and regional and subregional organizations are responding to the Programme of Action in a positive manner.**

Notes

[1] For details on the missions to Kenya and Sierra Leone, see A/57/209.

[2] S/2001/988, enclosure, sect. E; see also A/56/182, para. 27.

[3] For details of regional and subregional initiatives in Africa, see A/57/162 and A/57/209.